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SUBJECT: OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL: RESPONSE TO ODIHR
DIRECTOR LENARCIC

11. (U) Post is authorized to present the following statement
at the Permanent Council meeting in Vienna on October 30.

Begin text:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Ambassador Lenarcic for your comprehensive report.
The United States strongly supports ODIHR, which has earned
its place as the leading institution in the Human Dimension.

At a time when some OSCE participating States are
increasingly calling into question their core human dimension
commitments, we believe it is all the more important that
ODIHR continue to focus on the core elements of its mission
) election observation, promotion of human rights and
support for the development of democratic institutions.

Next week, Americans will go to the polls in our 110th
nationwide election since the founding of our democracy.
Even in a mature democracy like ours, there remain areas for
improvement in our electoral practices. We look forward to
ODIHR's report, and will take its recommendations seriously.
This is why we were also pleased to initiate a detailed
review in the Human Dimension Committee of ODIHR's report on
our 2006 elections. This was the first time that a
participating State had taken such an initiative. We believe
such reviews should become common practice for other
countries as well.

ODIHR's enduring success is directly attributable to its
well-known, objective criteria and procedures for election
observation. All participating States have an interest in
opposing any effort to undermine ODIHR's autonomy and
impartiality, as well as any attempts to turn back the clock
on the progress we have made in democratic practices within
the OSCE region. The United States has been and will
continue to be in the forefront of States protecting ODIHR
from political interference. In this regard, we believe that
the ODIHR has done an excellent job in fully responding to
the taskings given in Brussels Ministerial Decision 19/06.

The Democracy program projects are well designed and
implemented and provide emerging democracies with much needed
technical assistance in promoting the rule of law, developing
transparent legislative processes, and building civil
society. We encourage you to get directly involved in
promoting these quiet programs that may not win many
headlines, but are very effective in building and
strengthening democratic institutions and respect for the
rule of law.

In our view, the Human Rights program should focus more on
fundamental freedoms, such as freedom of expression, freedom
of assembly, and freedom of religion. The Human Rights
program should develop technical assistance and training
programs for the emerging democracies on how to ensure that
fundamental freedoms are respected.

ODIHR's tolerance work should focus on the priority areas of

combating intolerance where the participating States have reached consensus - combating anti-Semitism, intolerance and discrimination against Muslims, Christians and members of other religions, and racism, xenophobia and related intolerance.

In our view, the ODIHR effort to deal with hate crimes should focus on realistic, specific targeted initiatives that will help address the problem of core definitions, model legislation to meet OSCE commitments, data collection methods based on this model legislation, and a sharing of best practices.

Civil society participation is the foundation of the effective review of the implementation of human dimension commitments by participating States. ODIHR must set an example of inclusiveness of NGOs and transparency at all ODIHR-organized events and meetings and we applaud the Chairman-in-Office's strong support for NGO access.

We look forward to working with you Ambassador Lenarcic, and the participating States, in the implementation of our OSCE Human Dimension commitments. We applaud ODIHR for its excellent work, and you will continue to have our full support in the coming years.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

End text.
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